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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, an untracking program that places previously low-achieving students in college preparatory classes. The first part of the paper describes the origins of AVID at Clairemont High School in San Diego (California) and its development into a mature program. The students who participated proved that they could be successful by substantially raising their grade-point averages. All the participants attended college, and, as a group, received more than $50,000 in scholarships and loans. In addition, in the first year during which AVID students graduated, Clairemont's Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills scores improved 46.6 percent over the districtwide increase in total language and 35 percent over the increase in total mathematics. The second part of the paper describes the social processes and institutional practices that contribute to AVID's success in preparing underrepresented students for college. Evaluation indicates AVID's special instructional orientation is vital to the success of AVID's untracking program. Complementing this are the social scaffolds supporting student placement. By taking them to visit college campuses, exposing them to test-taking and note-taking techniques, and assisting them in completing college application and scholarship forms, AVID teaches low-income students explicitly in school what middle- income students learn implicitly at home. (Contains 14 references.) (GLR)

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The AVID Classroom:

A System of Academic and Social Supports for Low-Achieving Students

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To appear in: Jeannie Oakes and Karen Hunter Quartz (Editors)

Creating New Educational Communities:
Schools and Classrooms Where All Children Can Be Smart

(The 94th volume of the National Society for the Study of Education)

This paper is organized into two parts. Part I, written by Mary Catherine Swanson, details AVID, a highly successful program which places previously low achieving students in college preparatory classes. This part of the paper describes the origins of AVID and its development into a mature program. Part II is written by Hugh Mehan and Lea Hubbard, Department of Sociology, University of California, San Diego, who have conducted independent research on AVID. This part of the paper describes the social processes and institutional practices which contribute to AVID's success in preparing underrepresented students for college.

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PART I: THE AVID STORY:

THE INCEPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN UNTRACKING PROGRAM

> Josefina came to San Diego from Tijuana, Mexico when she was in the eighth grade. She spoke no English and recalls spending an entire year in classes learning how to pronounce in English the days of the week and the time on a clock. When she asked for a book, the teacher refused because "Mexican girls all have babies before they graduate from high school." Josefina read her first book in Spanish when she was thirteen; it was *Don Quixote*.
>
> In high school, Josefina was recruited into the AVID program. She was placed in all college preparation classes and received support to succeed in these rigorous courses in her AVID elective class. Josefina graduated from Clairemont High School with a B+ average in advanced level classes and enrolled in San Diego State University. She will graduate next year with her degree in English. Today she not only reads novels in English, she is also writing one.

Josefina is one of 6,000 AVID students in San Diego County and 5,500 AVID students across the nation who are proving that college and hopeful futures for underrepresented students are possible if educators expect that they will succeed. According to the California Department of Education, sixty percent of the jobs in California in the 90's require a baccalaureate degree (Honig, 1992). Although 1.8 million students in our K - 12 classrooms are African American or Latino, fewer than 1,500 of these students graduate from our public colleges and universities each year. Therefore, we must do more to prepare African American and Latino students for college or they will be shut out of the workforce in the 21st Century.

The Inception of AVID

AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. The word comes from the Latin *avidus*, "eager for knowledge." AVID's purpose is 1) to increase college participation among African American, Alaskan/Native American, Latino, and low-income students who are most underrepresented

in postsecondary education and 2) to restructure secondary school teaching methodologies to allow college preparatory curricula to be accessible to all students.

Raising Student Expectations and Achievement

The impetus for AVID was the impact that court - ordered desegregation in the San Diego Unified School District had on Clairemont High School in 1980. At that time I was Chair of the English Department at Clairemont, which was providing a traditional enriched curriculum to a homogeneous middle class student population, 80% of whom enrolled in college. In 1980, a new high school drew away our most affluent students, and 500 low income Latino and African American students were bussed into our school.

I planned the AVID program as a response to this change. In order to prepare students who are underrepresented in postsecondary institutions for admission to four-year colleges, I had to carefully consider the power structure and political ramifications of my actions on the school and district.

My first course of action involved the principal. I told him that I would enable a group of underprepared ethnically diverse students academically and enroll them in four year colleges where they would succeed. Because he was retiring at the end of the school year and would not have to face the faculty and administrators who undoubtedly opposed such an unrealistic idea, he gave me the "go-ahead." I then contacted the head of student outreach at UCSD for help; he agreed to provide tutors for the program, which I supported with grant funds. The tutors worked three class hours per week; two hours were devoted to direct instruction in writing which I conducted.

I recruited 30 ethnically and culturally diverse students who were not in college prep classes and had grade point averages in the 1.5 to 2.5 range for the first AVID class. They agreed to enroll in college prep classes and to do homework regularly in exchange for an elective class with academic and motivational support.

The new Clairemont principal asked me if I were staying or going to the new high school. I told him it depended upon his support of AVID. He pledged his support. I stayed.

School began with 30 AVID students placed into rigorous courses for which they did not have the prerequisites. Instead of physical science, they took biology; instead of consumer math, they took algebra; they all enrolled in advanced English, foreign language classes, physical education -- and the AVID elective class.

The faculty was skeptical regarding the plan, but I think they were willing to allow it on campus because they wished to teach advanced classes and needed the enrollment (which AVID could provide), and they didn't want to invest the time to oppose the idealistic teacher and her students. Truthfully, few teachers believed that the AVID students would be successful and many thought the bussed-in students should be enrolled in remedial classes.

Not infrequently I received notes from colleagues such as "this student is your responsibility; he does not belong in this school much less in my college preparatory class." I quit eating lunch in the faculty cafeteria because the talk around the lunch table was constantly focused on the troubles the bussed students caused, e. g., "these students" were ruining "our" school. The teachers didn't want to recognize that schools are to serve

students and that teachers must accept students as they are when they come to school.

On the first day of the elective class, the AVID students received binders filled with notetaking paper and record keeping forms. I asked them to take notes using the Cornell system (in which students jot detailed notes in a wide right-hand margin and questions in a narrow left-hand column) in all their academic classes. In the elective course, we developed subject specific study groups based on the students' questions which they developed from their Cornell notes as homework. We insisted that the tutors implement an *inquiry method* in which they helped the AVID students clarify thought based on their questions, not give them answers so that the AVID class would not become a glorified study hall or homework session.

Because AVID students were such active notetakers, academic teachers began to view them as serious learners. Honors students began to ask them about their notetaking techniques. As an English teacher, I knew the value of using writing as a tool of learning; therefore, I encouraged the students to keep learning logs and practice quick writes to clarify thought. Because the purpose of much of our writing was to gain an understanding of concepts rather than to publish, students were encouraged to write and speak in a non-threatening atmosphere, using their "thinking language." In other words, students' language was recognized as a legitimate form of expression, and their communication of ideas was not interrupted by insistence on "correctness."

Often a student would leave my class saying, "I am so tired. I have never tried to express myself for so long in English." They could not sit passively in class, and the insistence on class participation allowed them to

improve their language skills very rapidly. They began to live out two AVID maxims, the first adapted from E. M. Forster (1927 [1955]): "How do I know what I think until I see what I write or hear what I say?" The second one adapted from Reigstad & McAndrews (1984): "It is better for a student to be a partner in learning at a teacher's side for 5 minutes than a disciple at his or her feet for 5 months."

AVID students, tutors, and I melded almost as family. We knew when a student was in trouble academically, or emotionally, or both. We learned about child abuse, drug abuse, gang activity – lessons rarely revealed to English Literature or calculus teachers – and we helped sort through students' problems.

Gaining Faculty Support for Improving Curriculum and Instruction

Our progress was not always smooth. Just before winter break of the first year, some students were accused of cheating by the science department chair because most had received "A" or "B" grades on a Biology midterm. The science chair and I spoke individually with each student. All shared their notebooks filled with study notes; some cried at the accusations. The science teacher realized her incredible mistake and told the faculty about the wonderful AVID students. The incident fostered camaraderie among the group, and led us to develop a plan.

First, we sent a letter to all faculty explaining the students' goals. Second, we invited the faculty to visit the AVID class. About ten teachers with AVID students in their classes came, and they saw students gathered in circles of seven to ten, with a college tutor, notebooks open, talking in an organized and animated manner and challenging one another to formulate questions developed as a response to homework. They saw the names and assignments of each student posted, a system we used to determine our

study groups. Faculty were surprised by the open discussion of their own assignments. AVID students did not sit in classes anonymously, and the teachers could no longer teach anonymously.

We were now ready to take the next step. If I were to insure that a group of students who normally "slip through the cracks" of the educational system obtained the best education our school had to offer, then I could no longer ignore inequities in teaching quality.

AVID has at times been described as a subversive activity, and perhaps it is. When AVID students were having difficulty in learning concepts in classes such as algebra or biology, I worked with those teachers. So that the teachers would not feel threatened, I always placed blame with the students, e. g., "the AVID students are having difficulty with . . . ." I proposed sending college tutors into their classrooms to take lecture notes so tutors could work more effectively with the students. Teachers agreed. When teachers perceived that an expert was observing their lessons, they taught more effectively. Before long the tutors developed a good working relationship with the teachers. The tutors and I developed mini lessons for teachers, and the tutors demonstrated them in classes. For example, while the teacher was taking role, the tutor would ask the students to do a three to four minute quickwrite focusing on the day's lesson. At the end of the time, the tutor randomly selected some students to read aloud their quick write. The teacher now had insight into the students' understandings so that subsequent work could be focused on students' needs. The tutor also assigned extra credit for good quickwrites, showing the teacher that writing could be used for learning without having to "grade papers."

By the spring semester, the AVID students wished to have discussions with teachers regarding learning strategies. I invited the faculty to problem-

solving sessions. The principal and 20 teachers listened to the students' candid assessments of what facilitated and what inhibited their learning. For example, science teachers often showed films filled with complicated vocabulary which explained complex concepts and then immediately quizzed the students on the film. AVID students with limited English skills said they had difficulty working this quickly, but if they could take notes and discuss their notes collaboratively before an exam, they had much better access to the information. The teachers listened and accommodated the students' needs. The topics in these bi-weekly meetings included effective teaching strategies, the inadvisability of using "watered down texts" for AVID students and the validity of placement exams required for honors courses. Teachers shared successful strategies. Many began to use writing in subject area classes. Almost all started to use collaborative groups.

In 1982 this group worked with UCSD faculty members to prepare a body of writing lessons employing the "writing process" in discourse modes addressing all subjects. Through the work of Charles Cooper, Director of Writing Programs at UCSD, these lessons were incorporated in the California Assessment Program.

Summary

In the first few years of AVID, we had made significant progress. The students proved that they could be successful. The original 30 AVID students graduated from Clairemont with a cumulative GPA of 3.2, many of them in honors classes. All entered college – 28 went to four-year colleges and two went to community colleges. They received more than $50,000 in scholarships and loans. By the end of their freshman year, those attending UCSD and San Diego State University had a cumulative grade point average of 2.46.

By 1984 (the first year AVID students graduated), Clairemont's scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skillls had improved 46.6% higher than the districtwide increase in total language and 35% higher in total mathematics. That year, Clairemont became one of the three top feeder schools to UCSD and ranked fourth of 17 comprehensive district high schools in the number of graduates enrolled in full-time postsecondary education (Bell, 1984).

We were also somewhat successful in achieving our second goal -- changing and improving teaching practices. The Clairemont faculty was delighted that after 25 years, it was actually discussing student learning and implementing the writing process, inquiry methods and collaborative groups.

Developing and Replicating AVID

In 1986, under the auspices of California Assembly Bill 2321, I was asked to move to the San Diego County Office of Education to disseminate AVID. AVID had attracted attention not only because it fostered success among underrepresented students but also because the CTBS scores at Clairemont had improved so dramatically.

Currently more than 115 middle-level and senior high schools within San Diego County and more than 200 secondary schools in 58 districts outside San Diego County are implementing the program. In addition, 19 schools in the State of Kentucky and 30 schools in US Department of Defense Dependents Schools are replicating AVID.

In order to expand AVID, and to move from a highly personal program at a single school, to one which exists as an integral part of many schools, I needed to accomplish a number of tasks: 1) Convince school officials to recognize the serious academic gap between "majority" and

underepresented students; 2) Identify an outstanding teacher to work as the AVID elective lead teacher at each school and recruit an interdisciplinary site team to carry out the program; 3) Add AVID elective classes to the master schedule while allaying the fears of existing elective teachers that their programs would be threatened; 4) Find money to pay for tutors; 5) Create a staff development process for administrators, counselors, teachers, and tutors; 6) develop coordinated school site plans.

Recognizing the Issue

Many schools deny reality. They do not realize that underrepresented students are not performing at the upper limits of their academic potential. I have found it helpful to employ statistics generated by the school district or the state to point out the gap between "majority" and "minority" students. District and state reports are useful in making this case because they are written by outside agencies and do not single out individual teachers. Their impersonality helps make a personal case. For example, "School Performance Reports" which indicate students' enrollment in rigorous course work, the "California Postsecondary Education Reports," which show, by ethnicity, how many students graduate from high school and where they enroll in college, the "California Basic Education System" reports which indicate, by ethnicity, how many high school students take and how many complete college preparatory courses, are invaluable in bringing staff to a realistic view of their schools.

Selecting the AVID Lead Teacher

Appropriate selection of the AVID lead teacher is absolutely critical to developing a strong program. Experience has taught us that the teacher needs to be academically strong and to understand "academic press" in order to prepare students adequately. The teacher must be a coach to the

students, working with every aspect of the student's life that affects academic performance. The teacher must be a respected instructional leader who can lead colleagues to teach more effectively. Finally, the teacher must have enough experience in the educational system to know how to manipulate it so that students receive the best education possible. These teachers must assume a new role -- hiring and training paraprofessionals to work in classrooms. Many AVID teachers become fund-raisers to cope with the plight of inadequate funding, or expert field trip coordinators and parent facilitators. Every campus has one such teacher. Most are carrying heavy loads of "extra responsibilities." But these are the very professionals who can implement a successful program.

Adding AVID Classes to the Master Schedule

With colleges and universities increasing entry requirements, students' schedules in high school are crowded. Adding an extra elective to the program is not easy. Some schools have needed to lengthen the school day; others have offered electives as independent study courses. Teachers of elective courses often feel threatened by AVID because students may drop one of their classes to enroll in AVID. This dilemma is usually solved by allowing students to make the choice of whether they wish to enroll in AVID or another elective class.

Funding Tutors

Most schools have a little extra money to pay for AVID tutors, but funds from several categorical programs, including Chapter I, Chapter II, and the School Improvement Program have been used. Although all of these programs have strong constituencies among the faculty, school sites need to set priorities and combine programs in order to fund AVID. As soon as

schools have success with AVID, we have found that school boards are willing to commit general funds to it.

Developing Staff Development Models

We now know that AVID cannot rely on "one shot" workshops. On-going staff development and support is needed in order to achieve our program's goals. When new schools adopt AVID, they commit to sending a team of faculty, consisting of the principal, the head counselor, the AVID teacher, and instructional leaders from English, foreign language, history, science, and mathematics to a one week AVID Summer Institute. While at the institute, the team examines data about its school, develops a vision statement about their school, and outlines the steps needed to actualize that vision. Participants also learn to use writing to learn, inquiry, and collaboration methods. Because the institute is residential, teachers have to learn more about each other, professionally and personally. Although beliefs may not change in one week, actions may. Teachers return to the institute the following year to coach other teachers within their academic departments to spread the methodologies throughout the school.

The Summer Institute is reinforced by monthly workshops for AVID lead teachers, semi-annual site team meetings, and semi-annual site visitations by County Office AVID staff. Additionally, quarterly tutor and parent workshops are conducted, and feeder school and postsecondary liaisons are established.

Developing a Cohesive Educational Plan

Finally, most schools have numerous site plans, many with disparate ideas and goals. AVID seeks to amalgamate the plans into a cohesive overall plan which guides the school toward goals which provide an excellent education for *all* students.

PART II: THE PROCESSES RESPONSIBLE FOR AVID'S SUCCESS

Mary Catherine Swanson's intuitions about the success of AVID are borne out by our research. In 1990 and 1991, 253 students who had participated in the AVID untracking experiment for 3 years graduated from 14 high schools in the San Diego City Schools (SDCS) system. We interviewed 144 of these students; 72 (50%) reported attending four year colleges, 60 (42%) reported attending two year or junior colleges and the remaining 12 students (8%) said they are working or doing other things (Mehan et al, 1993). The 50% four year college enrollment rate for students who have been "untracked" compares favorably with the San Diego City Schools' average of 37% (Bell, 1993) and the national average of 39% (Carter & Wilson, 1991).

The college enrollment rates for the 1992 graduating class are not quite as good, but they are equally impressive when compared to local and national averages; 46% of 105 students who graduated from AVID in 1992 said that they enrolled in four year colleges, 39% said they were enrolled in 2 year colleges and 5% said they were working when we interviewed them in 1993.

This untracking program works evenly across ethnic and socioeconomic lines. AVID students from the two major underrepresented ethnic groups, African Americans and Latinos, enroll in college in numbers which exceed local and national averages. Of the Latino students from the classes of 1990, 1991 and 1992 who participated in AVID for 3 years, 43% enroll in four year colleges. This figure compares favorably to the San Diego City Schools average of 25% and the national average of 29%. African American students who participated in AVID for three years from 1990 - 1992 also enrolled in college at rates higher than the local and national

averages; 54% of African American students in 1990-91 and 58% of the class of 1992 enrolled in four year colleges, compared to 38% from the SDCS and the national average of 33%.

AVID students who come from the lowest income strata (parents' median income below $19,999) enroll in four year colleges in equal or higher proportion to students who come from higher income strata (parents' median income between $20,000 and $65,000). AVID students who come from families in which their parents have less than a college education enroll in 4-year colleges more than students who come from families who have a college education.

Based on interviews with 144 graduates of the program, 150 students who are currently in the program at "Monrovia," "Saratoga," "Pimlico" and "Churchill" High Schools and observations in these four schools, we are uncovering the social processes and institutional practices which contribute to AVID's success.

Isolation of Group Members and Public Markers of Group Identity

In order to transform raw recruits into fighting men, the military isolates them from other, potentially conflicting social forces. Religious orders and gangs operate in a similar manner, shielding their recruits from competing interests and groups (Goffman, 1964; Jankowski, 1992). Whether intentionally or not, AVID has adopted this principle.

AVID selects promising students and isolates them in special classes which meet once a day, every day of the school year. Instead of going to shop or drivers' ed for their elective class period, they go to the AVID room, a classroom identified by signs and banners. Students often return to the AVID room at lunch time or after school to do homework or socialize, actions which further mark their distinctive group membership.

AVID students are given special notebooks, emblazoned with the AVID logo, in which they are to take AVID-style class notes. These notebooks signal their membership in this special group. Some schools have designed distinctive ribbons and badges which AVID students wear on their clothes. Others have adorned their graduation gowns or mortarboards with AVID ribbons. Still other AVID classes publish a newspaper reporting on the accomplishments of AVID students. All of these actions further distinguish AVID students as members of a special group.

Explicit Socialization in the Hidden Curriculum

Once isolated as a group in these classes, AVID students are provided social supports which assist them through the transition from low track to academic track status. These "scaffolds" (Wood et al, 1976) include explicit instruction in the hidden curriculum of the classroom, those often implicit techniques which are key to academic success.

At a minimum, students in all the AVID classrooms we observed were given instruction in note taking and study skills. When a more extensive approach to the hidden curriculum was taken, students were provided explicit instruction in test taking strategies, including ways to eliminate distracting answers on multiple choice questions, strategies for approximating answers and probabilities about the success of guessing. One AVID teacher devoted two successive weeks to SAT preparation, including practice with vocabulary items, administering practice tests, reviewing wrong answers and teaching strategies for taking tests. This teacher reviewed the kinds of analogies typically found on the SAT with her students so they could practice the kinds of problems they would encounter on their tests. This teacher also sent her students to an expert math teacher for assistance on math test items. She reinforced this teaching by explaining

that she was teaching them the same academic tricks found in the expensive Princeton Review SAT preparation class.

While note taking, test taking and study skills were taught routinely, by far the most prevalent activity in the four AVID programs we studied involved the college application process. Procedures for filing applications, meeting deadlines for SAT tests, requesting financial aid and scholarships dominated discussion. At Pimlico High, for instance, students must complete an AVID assignment each week in which students do writing and/or reading tasks directly related to college. The junior class at Saratoga was given a handout, "Choosing Your College," containing a checklist of information typically found in college catalogs. Students were instructed to fill in the information for that college according to the assigned checklist. This task presumably made them more familiar with college catalogs and would help them choose a college to fit their personal needs.

Teacher Advocacy and Sponsorship

Another role AVID teachers adopt is that of student advocate. When interviewed, students at the four schools we studied consistently reported that AVID teachers intervene in the academic maze on their behalf. If students are absent, they call them to see why they have been absent, check with teachers to insure that they get missing assignments, catch up on their work, and are not penalized for their absence.

The AVID coordinator at Monrovia High School circulated a list with the names of the AVID students in their respective classes to all advanced English teachers. She informed them that they would be receiving extra help in this subject, but if they were having any problems, she was to be contacted. By this strategy, the burden of failure is shifted away from the student and toward the teacher who must monitor the student's progress.

We observed several episodes of teacher advocacy. During the new "tardy sweep" policy at Saratoga, one of the AVID students was late to a class. The punishment proscribed by the new policy was detention, which meant the AVID student could not make up missing work, including tests. She was irate and complained to Mrs. Lincoln:

> "I'm just trying to get an education. I just want to learn. They are keeping me from learning, just for being a minute late."

Mrs. Lincoln arranged for the vice principal to hear the students' complaints the very next day. Many students affirmed that no one would have listened to them had they not been AVID students and if Mrs. Lincoln had not acted on their behalf. Clearly, this teacher has adopted an advocacy role that extends beyond traditional teaching duties.

When several students complained to the AVID teacher about their failing math grades, and blamed the teacher for their plight, she spoke with the principal and the teacher on the students' behalf and arranged extra tutoring. Although it was difficult to prove the students' assertion, the AVID coordinator insured that both the academic teacher and the principal knew that the situation was being monitored. She was able to help other AVID students by advising them to take math from a different teacher.

Advocacy on behalf of students is not limited to the academic realm; it extends into and blends with the personal realm as well. The following are typical student comments about this dimension of the teacher's role:

> "The AVID teacher is someone you can talk to. You need to have someone." (African American female, Saratoga)

> "The AVID coordinator is someone who takes time to listen to individual needs. She keeps pushing you and reminding you that you can do well." (African American female, Saratoga)

The AVID coordinator at Saratoga confirmed our impression that her role included duties as a personal advocate. She has intervened in suicide

attempts, visited sick students, called parents if she felt that their child was employed for too many hours or was suffering abuse at home.

AVID teachers also mediate the college-going process by taking their students to colleges. Of particular note, the AVID coordinator at Pimlico takes her students to Black colleges and universities in Washington DC and Atlanta each Spring. For many students, these field trips were their first opportunity to see a college campus. While there, students visit classes, talk to college students, and stay over night in dorm rooms. The following comment underlines the importance these trips play for AVID students:

> "Field trips were great. I didn't even know what a college looked like until Mrs. Lincoln took us. It's like eating a cookie. It really tempts us to eat another one. You've smelled it and seen it and you want to buy it really bad."

Formation of Voluntary Associations

Special classrooms, badges of distinction, these are visible markers which define the space for AVID students to develop an academically oriented identity. Within this space, AVID students developed new academically oriented friends, or joined academic friends who were already in AVID.

Several Saratoga students told us that they really didn't know anyone in AVID when they joined, but after a few years, almost all of their friends were from AVID. These friendships developed because they were together in classes throughout the day and worked together in study groups. Coordinators encouraged these friendships by minimizing competition. The AVID Coordinator at Monrovia High School, for example, told her students that they should think of themselves on "parallel ladders with each other. There should be no competition between students, but rather an opportunity to share notes and to help one another."

Some AVID students did join AVID to be with their friends. Cynthia, a Latina from Monrovia High School, said her friends were already in AVID, and because they were doing well, she wanted to be with them. Now all her friends are in AVID. Thomas, an African American male at Saratoga said that he told his two good friends from elementary school that "they had to get into AVID because it would really help with their grades." He even called one of his friend's mother to convince her that AVID was good for her son. These three boys have remained good friends in AVID and always study together.

Informal activities also help develop academically oriented associations. Students in AVID classrooms often discuss among themselves matters relevant to their adolescence. Students use this period of time to bounce their values and troubles off one another, to test their principles and ideas and react to others. In magnet schools where African American and Latino students are bussed in, the AVID classroom may be the only time these students see each other during the school day. In those classes where AVID students from grades 9 - 12 are mixed, the younger students observe older students' behavior and how teachers interact with them.

The longer students are in the program, the more ties seem to intensify. These sentiments were articulated by a Latina who attends Monrovia. AVID provides a different environment for her. "At home they expect me to get married. Here they expect me to go to college." Because of the pressures she receives from home, Maria attributes much of her academic success to the girl friends she cultivated in AVID. She studies together with her two friends and

> "We chat a lot about college and what we want out of life. Our study group really opens up a lot of issues. Everyone is really

> motivated to go to college. It really helps to be around others that want to go. It makes you want it more."

We thought the highly visible markers of AVID (the notebooks students are required to carry to classes, the special class periods established for them, the college visits arranged for them, the newspapers they publish), would stigmatize AVID students in the eyes of their peers. But this marking process has had the opposite effect. AVID students reported that their friends who were not in AVID were jealous. They wanted to be in AVID for the comradarie to be sure, but also because they wanted to take advantage of the resources which AVID made available to its students, such as information about scholarships, college entrance exams, and visits to colleges.

Conclusion: Social Scaffolds Support Academic Placement

The college enrollment record of students who have participated in AVID's untracking program gives us some evidence to support the idea of organizing schools to emphasize an academic curriculum as an alternative to the prevailing practice of placing underrepresented students in vocational or general education tracks. AVID's special instructional orientation is vital to the success of AVID's untracking program. By emphasizing "writing as a tool for learning," the inquiry method, collaborative learning groups and intensive staff development, Mary Catherine Swanson makes a convincing case for the importance of the academic portions of her program. Complementing AVID's academic practices and instructional orientation are the social scaffolds supporting student placement. By isolating AVID students in special groups, marking their academic identity and dispensing academic tricks, AVID is giving students explicit instruction in the implicit, or hidden, curriculum of the school. Included in the hidden curriculum are

the special ways of talking, writing, thinking and acting that are demanded by the school, but seldom discussed openly by the school.

The sons and daughters of middle income (and upper middle income) families routinely gain access to the hidden curriculum via implicit socialization practices deployed at home. But the sons and daughters of low income parents often do not gain access to this implicit knowledge because their parents have not had direct, personal experience with the vagaries of the higher education process. By exposing AVID students to test taking and note taking techniques, by assisting them in completing college application and scholarship forms, by taking them to visit college campuses, AVID teaches low income students explicitly in school what middle income students learn implicitly at home. In Bourdieu's (1986) terms, AVID gives low income students some of the cultural capital at school which is similar to the cultural capital that economically advantaged parents give to their children at home.

Teachers' sponsorship of students augments this explicit socialization process. The academic life of AVID students in school is supported by dedicated teachers who enter the lives of their students and serve as mediators between them, their high schools and the college system. By expanding the definition of their teaching role to include the sponsorship of students, AVID coordinators encourage success and help remove impediments to students' academic achievement.

It is a simple fact: Kids can't go to college if they don't take the appropriate classes. By insisting that previously underachieving students enroll in college prep classes, AVID is increasing the possibility that students from backgrounds which are underepresented in universities will have the preparation necessary to enroll in them. But low achieving

students cannot be left to sink or swim in academically demanding classes for which they do not have the academic preparation. Unless untracked students are wrapped in a system of social supports, they will not succeed; and if they fail, then the entire untracking effort may be derailed.

If students don't succeed in untracking programs or collaborative learning groups, then skeptics will have a new round of ammunition to fire at the prospect of low income and underrepresented students succeeding in academic programs. To blunt that criticism, it appears necessary to treat the academic success of low achieving students as a school wide issue, because researchers who have studied educational reform (Sarason, 1982; Cuban, 1986; Oakes et al, 1993) show that educational innovations have the greatest chance of success when significant portions of the school culture are mobilized.

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